

TEACHER'S CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' SPOKEN ERRORS IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Many EFL students encounter spoken errors repeatedly. In this sense, corrective feedback on students' errors might be useful since the errors that are not corrected for too long, might be fossilized (Harmer, 2012). A case study is utilized to examine the types of corrective feedback used by teacher on the students' spoken errors and the students' responses toward the corrective feedback. This study takes place in a general English class in an English course in Bandung. Through classroom observation and interview, it is discovered that recast is the most frequent strategy employed since it is considered more appropriate by the teacher. The students respond positively to the teacher's corrective feedback and feel that it can improve their English skill. It can be concluded that the corrective feedback strategies can help teachers deal with student' spoken errors. Practically, this study is expected to contribute some informative inputs for teachers to use corrective feedback on students' spoken errors. Theoretically, it is hopefully able to enrich literature in corrective feedback topic. Further research in larger setting is recommended to provide more comprehensive result that helps teachers support the improvement of students' speaking ability.

Keywords: *corrective feedback strategies, spoken errors, teacher's corrective feedback*

To be proficient in a foreign language may mean to be able to communicate orally in the target language. However, to be proficient is not a simple and short process. The students and teachers may encounter some problems in the teaching and learning process one of which is the errors that the students have to stumble over and over again. Errors refer to the students' unacceptable utterance that might be happened because of the students' lack of knowledge on particular language items (Ellis, 2003, p.15). Making errors is natural (Harmer, 2012, p. 86), important and valuable (Lightbown and Spada, 1993, p.80) in language learning. It is an indication of a learning process taking place in the students' mind and of their first language (L1) interference (Harmer, 2007; Harmer, 2012). However, teachers might be questioning whether they have to treat or ignore the students' errors. In this case, Gebhard (2006) and Brown (2001) assert that teacher should play a role as feedback provider for the students so that teachers' corrective feedback is an important element in language learning.

Many studies on corrective feedback have been conducted. Nevertheless, the questions about the importance of corrective feedback are still emerged so that it is necessary to explore this issue further. Thus, this study tries to explore the teacher's corrective feedback on students' spoken errors which focuses on the strategies employed and the students' responses toward the teacher's corrective feedback.

The Roles of Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback is believed to have both positive and negative effects on students' learning (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie and Timperley, 2007). On the positive side, feedback on students' language errors can provide an input for students and promoting the acquisition process especially in the EFL context where students do not receive much exposure outside the classroom (Gebhard, 2006). Moreover, it prevents the danger of fossilization of errors which is caused by the errors that are not corrected for too long (Harmer, 2012, p.86; Lightbown and Spada, 1993, p.80). Several studies found that oral corrective feedback can develop students' grammatical (Lyster and Ranta, 1997 & Park, 2012) and oral competence (Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Mulyani, 2009; and Park, 2012). It can also lead the students to be more engaged in the process of learning (Octaviana, 2011). On the other hand, too much feedback could give negative effect to the students such as feeling controlled which often leads them to stop their efforts at communication (Brown, 2001, p. 288). In this sense, feedback can become a destructive thing for them (Brookhart: 2008).

Errors and Error Correction Strategies

This present study utilized error classifications according to Donald (2003) namely: lexical error, phonological errors; syntactic errors; interpretive errors; pragmatic error; and translation error. Regarding the error correction strategies, this study uses six types of error correction strategies proposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997) namely: (1) explicit correction in which teacher explicitly tells the students that their utterances are incorrect and provides the correct form of the utterances; (2) recast which is provided implicitly but indicating that the students' utterances are incorrect and the teacher reformulates all parts of the students' error without

including the error; (3) clarification request is when the teacher ask for confirmation since the message cannot be understood by the teacher; (4) metalinguistic feedback which refers to teacher's comments, information or question related to the students' deviant utterances without providing the correct form explicitly; (5) elicitation in which teacher elicits the correct forms by asking the students to complete the teachers' utterance, to reformulated versions or to answer the question the teacher asks; and (6) repetition which requires the teacher to repeat the students' incorrect utterance with raising intonation emphasis to draw students' attention to the incorrect utterance.

There are, indeed, many choices for teachers to give corrective feedback to the students. However, teachers who have a role as feedback provider also have to be aware that the feedback does not always give positive effect for the students' language learning. Therefore, we can assume that feedback, no matter how we define it as a positive thing, might be a destructive agent for the students if they are not provided in good manner. In this case, a teacher needs to consider things such as timing, kind of error the student commits, students' characteristics and learning styles in giving the feedback.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative case study design. A case study design has been considered appropriate, as this study, in line with one main characteristic of a case study, is concerned with a case on the application of corrective feedback and how the students respond to the use corrective feedback by the teacher.

The setting of this study is an English course in Bandung. A general English class was chosen purposively as the teacher gives more emphasis on speaking activity for the students. It can be considered appropriate for this study purposes which focuses on oral corrective feedback.

The study employed two data collection techniques, namely: classroom observations and interviews. Classroom observation was conducted to get data about the strategies employed by the teacher to correct students' spoken errors and how the students respond toward the teacher's corrective feedback. Through classroom observation, the researcher could see unspeakable point of view that could not be obtained through interview (Alwasilah, 2011) for example what occurs in the teacher's facial expressions and gestures when correcting the students' errors.

Moreover, interview was carried out to both the teacher to confirm about the reasons of the teacher in giving the corrective feedback and to the students regarding the responses toward teacher's corrective feedback on their spoken errors. Semi-structured questions were employed here in order to provide the interviewee control over the course of the interview and the interviewer a great deal of flexibility (Nunan, 1992).

Findings and Discussion

The data collected from four observations revealed that there are several types of errors in students' utterances. Some students' spoken errors were corrected, and some others were left uncorrected. The following table describes the number and percentage of students' corrected errors:

Table 4.2 Number and percentage of corrected errors

No	Error Types	Numbers of errors	Number of Corrected Errors
1	Lexical errors	8 (4.2%)	5 (62.5 %)
2	Phonological errors	58 (30.4 %)	36 (62.1 %)
3	Syntactical errors	118 (61.8 %)	16 (13.6 %)
4	Interpretive errors	1 (0.5 %)	1 (100 %)
5	Pragmatic errors	1 (0.5 %)	1 (100 %)
6	Translation errors	5 (2.6 %)	5 (100 %)
Total		191	64 (33.5 %)

From the table above, it is shown that the most frequent error committed by the students is the syntactical errors (118). This type of errors is also rarely corrected by the teacher with the percentage of 13.6 %. In addition, interpretive, pragmatic and translation errors were all corrected by the teacher (100 %) because their occurrences were only several times if compared to the syntactical errors which occurred 118 times. Syntactical errors mostly occurred because the classroom activities were designed to let the students to produce their own sentences and do presentations in front of the class.

Based on the observation, there are two occasions in which the teacher likely to correct the students' spoken errors: first, when the students are having conversation with the teacher about the topic being discussed; and second, when the error is too obvious to ignore particularly in terms of their pronunciation. For example, when some students pronounced the word student /stʌdent/ and niece /naɪsɪ/ instead of student /'stuːd ə nt/ and niece /niːs/.

However, the data showed that the teacher was likely not to correct all students' spoken errors in their presentations. The teacher confirmed in the interview that the students' errors are not necessarily corrected all the time because of some reasons. First, it would take time. The students' presentations were implemented in the post-activity so that it is quite hard to manage the time in the last 30 minutes of the class. If the teacher correct all students' error particularly the syntactical errors, they would spend much time to discuss the grammatical pattern itself. Second, the teacher did not correct every student's error particularly the syntactical errors since the class is more focused on the speaking skill. The focus itself was decided by the students and teacher at the beginning of the course. In this context, the main point is the students' bravery to communicate in English in the classroom as well as in general communication. Third, the teacher also asserted that if she corrected the students' error every time they commit error, the teacher was worried that they will be likely to respond negatively toward the correction or the teacher. Regarding this issue, the teacher preferred not to give much feedback in order to avoid students' anxiety. It confirms Brookhart's statement (2008) that feedback can also give negative effect if it is not given in a good manner or if it is given too much.

Teacher's Corrective Feedback Strategies

The data shows that the teacher used four types of corrective feedback among the six types of corrective feedback proposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997). The following table shows the percentage of each type of feedback based on the classroom observation.

Table 4.3 The distribution of feedback types

Feedback Types	Percentage (n=64)
Explicit correction (n=5)	7.8 %
Recast (n=55)	85.9 %
Elicitation (n=2)	3.1 %
Clarification request (n=2)	3.1 %
Metalinguistic clues (n=0)	0
Repetition (n=0)	0

The table shows that recast is the most frequently corrective feedback employed by the teacher with the percentage of 85.9 % of all corrected errors. This result is in line with previous studies conducted by Khaerunisa (2007) and Lyster and Ranta (1997). Compared to both former studies, this study showed higher percentage of the use of recast. It was also discovered that the recast strategy was mostly employed to respond to the students' phonological errors while the students were having presentations in front of the classroom. The teacher mostly gave the correction directly after the students make the errors. Explicit correction and elicitation were also found in the study with lower percentage, meanwhile metalinguistic clues and repetition were not found at all.

Students' Responses toward the Teacher's Corrective Feedback on Their Spoken Errors

The data from observation revealed that the oral correction strategies that the teacher employed did not cause any observable anxiety. The students whose errors were corrected did not seem to feel offended. Moreover, a low-achiever, medium-achiever, and high-achiever students in the interview responded positively towards teacher's correcting strategies since the strategies help them improve their speaking skill. A student argued that their school teacher did not give much attention to their speaking skill. Additionally, since the classroom atmosphere is conducive, students did not feel anxious even if the teacher corrected them in front of their classmates. This result is in line with a research result by Mulyani (2009) which has revealed that no matter what the types of feedback given by the teacher on their oral presentation, the students responded positively toward the feedback given.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The analysis of the data shows that syntactical errors were the most frequently occurred since the students have to produce their own sentences to be presented in front of the class. Furthermore, this study has revealed two occasions in which the teacher tended to correct the students' spoken errors: first, when the students interacted with the teacher; and second, when the errors that the students made were too obvious not to treat. In response to the students' spoken errors, the teacher employed various types of feedback with higher percentage of the use of recast (85.9 %). Recast is regarded more appropriate and polite by the teacher because by asking question like "do you mean ...?" and then reformulating all parts of the students' utterance without including the error, the students will not feel anxious and offended when they are corrected. It is also shown from the interview that he students responded positively on the use of corrective feedback in correcting students' spoken errors. It can be assumed that the corrective feedback becomes less intimidating due to the friendly atmosphere of the classroom.

It is suggested for teachers to consider many things in giving corrective feedback to the students such as the time, the lesson objectives, the type of error the student commits, the characteristics and the learning styles of the students in order to provide effective feedback. It is also necessary to provide feedback in a good manner. For further researchers, it is suggested to conduct further studies in larger scale and longer period to gain more various and detailed data.

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